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“TREES” ON THE STAGE OF SHAKESPEARE

The question whether any setting existed on the Elizabethan stage for the representation of woods and forests seems at first sight singularly lacking in importance and interest. It has not even the distinction of being much disputed, for practically all writers on the furnishings of the theater, who admit the use of any settings at all, agree that such a setting was actually employed. Nobody, however, seems to have realized the consequences of this admission. Discussions on the use of scenery, on methods of staging, on the very existence of certain properties, still continue, which, if the employment of this wood-setting were clearly established, would be either quite unnecessary or at least decidedly modified. Because of these far-reaching consequences then, if for no other reason, it may not be useless nor uninteresting to examine the evidence in favor of the existence of a forest-setting, to consider what that setting probably was, and to indicate the conclusions on more general subjects to which this examination points.

The purpose of this inquiry is to show: (1) that a forest-setting did actually exist; (2) that it was employed in a most unusual way and in situations where one would not naturally suppose it; (3) that in consequence of this use our whole attitude toward the subject of staging and our treatment of texts in this connection must radically change; and finally, (4) to illustrate more clearly than did my preceding papers¹ the fundamental principle of staging followed by Elizabethan dramatists and stage managers.

There are three classes of evidence for the existence of wood-settings on the stage of Shakespeare: the direct proof of the direc-

¹“Some Principles of Elizabethan Staging,” *Modern Philology*, April and June, 1905. The present paper is, like these, limited to a consideration of the plays produced before 1603. Later plays I shall consider at some future time—those given before 1614 at the Globe and Blackfriars, very soon, I hope. They seem, however, so far as I have yet examined them to confirm the conclusions already presented.

I am glad to take this opportunity to correct a misstatement (April, 1905, p. 31) that no one previous to Broadmeier had noted the existence of “split scenes.” Mr. W. W. Greg has been kind enough to call my attention to his article “Webster’s White Devil,” in *Modern Language Quarterly*, December, 1900, in which this device is fully illustrated.

tions as printed in the old quartos, and of the expense accounts; the more doubtful evidence of the textual allusions, so common in a large number of the plays; and finally a curious bit which from its character must be left for the moment undescribed. The evidence under no one of these classes, except perhaps the last, is especially strong; but the total impression is, I think, certain and unmistakable.

The direct proof is practically nil. A reference here and there in the accounts of the Office of the Revels at court, e. g., "Tymber for the forest, ij sh. vj d." (p. 41; 1572-73); stray directions in unimportant plays, "Enter Neronis in the forest in man's apparel" (p. 169, *Sir Clyamon and Sir Clamydes*, 1599); "Here enter Sedmond with Clarissa and Conditions out of the wood" (l. 83, *Common Conditions*, before 1576), are all which offer themselves.

Textual allusions to woods are, on the other hand, extremely common; but skeptical readers have objected that this shows not a frequent use of the property, but no use at all; the poet having to indicate by his text the imagined scene of the action. Even if this objection be true, the number of the allusions shows at least how useful such a property would have been, and forces one to the conclusion that before many years so great a need must certainly have been supplied. But is the objection true? If the references to woods were dragged in, if they were of rare occurrence and then only in scenes where the plot absolutely required a forest-setting, one might doubt its reality. These allusions usually are introduced, however, without obvious effort, and sometimes into scenes where woods would actually be incongruous and improbable; where the author, indeed, would, according to all modern notions, avoid and not introduce allusions to forests and trees. Marston, for instance, in *Antonio and Mellida*, Act IV, in a scene situated probably on the sea-coast, and described as a "bleak waste," a "cold marsh," suddenly has his fugitive exclaim: "Even trees have tongues and will betray our life;" Marlowe, in *Dido*, Act I, makes Aeneas, just landed, tell his companions: "You shall have leaves and windfall boughs enow, near to these woods." Marsh and seashore are not commonly associated with woods; there is nothing in either situation to require the mention of trees

and woods. To say that such allusions take the place of wood-settings necessary to the plot is manifestly absurd; instead of being necessary, they are quite the reverse, and their presence must itself be accounted for.

A similar illustration occurs in Greene's *Alphonsus* (1599). The play is full of references to woods; if any play were ever so furnished, this one must have been. At about line 1060, Amurack, the Turkish king, awakens from a dream which has angered him against his wife Fausta. He rises in a rage from his chair—the scene is in his palace—and banishes her. With no clearing of the stage indicated—the emperor's chair is still upon the stage—Medea suddenly enters and inquires of Fausta what it is that causes her to leave the court "and all alone passe through these thickest groues." Why does Greene introduce this remark about groves? The scene at court certainly does not require, does not even allow, such an allusion. Is it not the most reasonable explanation to say that the remark is due, in part at least, to the actual presence of the setting on the stage? The play should have had this setting for other scenes; Greene, thinking of his scene as it would actually appear on the stage, knew that the woods would be there, perhaps near the door through which Fausta would go out; and naturally, perhaps half unconsciously, introduced the remark into his dialogue; the allusion thus arising, not from the absence of a necessary property, but from the presence of an unnecessary one.

Perhaps there was another reason, however; perhaps Greene did this consciously and with purpose. There was no real need of mentioning the woods in the palace scene, even though they were present on the stage, unless something we have not yet noticed influenced the dramatist. What this as yet unnoticed circumstance was, will, I think, be clear if we mentally review, first, the wood scenes of the Elizabethan drama, and, second, the scenes supposed to be located in solitary and desert places. In many cases these will coincide—the wood scenes are usually represented as solitary, the solitary scenes usually mention woods. One of the principal characteristics of the Forest of Arden, for instance, is its savagery and solitude. To emphasize this we are told of

the famished lion and the venomous snake, and of Orlando's and Adam's desperate need. Similarly, but in illustration of the second point, the scenes already referred to from *Dido* and from *Antonio and Mellida*, which are primarily conceived of as desolate and solitary, mention the woods and forests, even though the scene of the one is a seashore, and of the other a waste. Between woods, and solitude and desolation, there seems to have existed in the Elizabethan mind, and naturally enough, a close connection. The one suggested the other. When the dramatists came to stage their plays, they made use of this association. Suppose they wished to suggest a seashore, a heath, or a desert—any place solitary and savage and desolate. How could they do this? A bed would suggest very adequately a bedroom; a throne, a palace; but what could represent a waste? This association of forests with solitude gave them their clue, and in consequence we find woods referred to, not only in actual forest scenes, as might possibly have been the case had no wood-setting existed, but also in other scenes of solitude, where there is no reason for the reference except the actual presence of the setting upon the stage. The incongruity of using woods in a scene conceived of as a desert or a seashore was counterbalanced by making the necessary impression of desolation deeper and clearer in the minds of the audience. For this reason, then, Greene in *Alphonsus* refers to the trees already on the stage, since by so doing he emphasized the fundamental idea of the second part of his scene.

Perhaps this "extended" use of woods, if I may so term it, for any scene of desolation seems purely theoretical and impossible. It certainly is quite opposed to modern notions. Fortunately, however, direct proof of it exists in a single line of the Revels accounts (p. 41; 1572-73): "for provizion *and* cariage of trees *and* other things to the Coorte for a wilderness in a playe, viij sh. vj d." No clearer statement could be desired: woods in 1572-73 were used at court to represent a wilderness. But such customs do not spring up nor die in a moment or a year. Neither are they usually limited to one place. Thus the fact that this particular reference is to a court play does not particularly weaken its force. Public companies played there: if this custom appealed

to them, there was nothing to prevent them from introducing it upon the public stage. This one line therefore not only shows that the extended use of the wood-setting for deserts and solitudes was an actual fact at court, but also makes it probable at other places and at other times. That the public theaters certainly did have the same custom is shown by the facts which are presently to be discussed under our third argument for the existence of the wood-setting. Before turning to that, however, we may note that the total result of the evidence from textual allusions is decidedly for the actual use of the setting, and that their extended use makes the whole subject of “trees” and of properties in general, even more important than one would at first have supposed.

The third argument for the existence of a wood-setting is based on three entries in the *Booke of Plaies* of Dr. Forman, the notorious astrologer and quack doctor of the early seventeenth century. This man, it will be remembered, attended plays largely, it would appear, for their “criticism of life,” and when he returned home, made a short memorandum of what he had noticed in each play. Among the plays to which he listened were three of Shakespeare’s—*Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, and the *Winter’s Tale*. His notes were founded on the actual productions at the theater: what he says of the methods of representation is therefore of unquestionable authority. Fortunately the notes on each of these plays record the use of forests or woods, and in such a way as to place beyond all doubt the existence of wood-settings, and, more than that, their use for scenes not necessarily wood scenes at all. In *Macbeth* (1610), he noted “how Macbeth and Banquo . . . two noblemen of Scotland, riding through a wood, there stood before them three women Fairies.” But the scene according to the text was not a wood at all, but a heath; there is not the slightest hint in the text—nor, for that matter, in Holinshed—of wood or forest. Where, then, did Forman get his ideas of the setting? If not from the words of the actors, it must have been from something on the stage, and from something which would have made a clear impression of woods upon him; in other words, from a wood-setting, and, be it noted, a wood-setting used, not for a true forest scene, but to suggest

solitude and desolation. Here, as in the Revels accounts, we have "trees for a wilderness," and without a single hint of their presence in the text.

In *Cymbeline*, in like manner, Forman speaks of a "cave in the woods." To be sure, this scene might well be in a forest—there is nothing like the "heath" to contradict that idea—but the text does not suggest it, and therefore, as before, we ask how Forman came to say definitely that there was a wood. The most natural answer is again that what he saw was a wood scene, and that the actual stage properties suggested his remark.

The third play which Forman noted furnishes, like *Macbeth*, proof not only of wood-settings, but of their use in other scenes of solitude. He saw the *Winter's Tale* in 1611. In this he observed "how Perdita was caried into bohemia & ther laid in a forrest." The text does not mention tree or forest; the scene, as we all remember, is the famous "coast of Bohemia." Even the *History of Dorastus and Fawnia* does not suggest a wood. We have, then, three uses of wood-setting where the text does not suggest it, and two where the text would not, according to modern notions, even allow it. The existence of some sort of forest property and its use in the extended manner already described are thus established beyond a doubt.

Perhaps I may be allowed to emphasize also the importance of these three illustrations from Forman in another way. They show that the methods of study we have been applying to the old plays are quite inadequate. Most students have been very suspicious of textual allusions to properties, and have explained them away as poetic imaginings, or mere substitutes for purely imaginary furnishings. In consequence, even so well-versed a scholar as Mr. Sidney Lee speaks of the old stage as bare,¹ and other less well-informed writers base all their theories on the idea of an almost unset stage. Obviously this opinion is absolutely unfounded, for here are three instances where furnishings must have been employed, though neither text nor directions contain a hint of them. Possibly some directions and textual allusions are purely poetic and refer to imaginary settings; for example,

¹ *English Miscellany Presented to Doctor Furnivall*, p. 246.

"These stretching mountains clad with snow," *Wounds of Civil War* (1587?, published 1594), Act III; but the great majority of them are to be accepted as indicating real and practical furnishings. These notes of Forman's throw the burden of proof in any particular instance no longer upon those who believe that textual allusions refer to real properties, but upon the skeptics. Indeed, not only are textual allusions no longer to be doubted; scenes where there are none, but which from the nature of the story demand common settings, must be supposed in most cases to have been properly equipped even upon the public stage. One may doubt, perhaps, the existence of certain rare properties unless the directions specifically mention them, but where woods, thrones, tables, beds, chairs, arras, etc., etc., could be used to advantage, these notes of Forman's certainly warrant one in assuming their employment without mention either in direction or text. Thus one's whole attitude toward the old plays is changed: the furnishings were not simple nor the stage bare, for just as today properties not even required by the action were employed to make the scene more vivid and realistic.

But what was it like, this wood-setting? Was it a painted drop curtain; did it consist of trees, real or constructed; or was it a combination of both? That it was a real furnishing and not merely a label is certain. But what the forest-setting actually was, is hard, practically impossible, to determine. To me it seems to have been usually a collection of *trees*, perhaps supplemented by a painted curtain. There is absolutely no proof that I know of for this curtain, but it is so easy to provide that, if anyone wishes to suppose it existed, there is little reason for objecting; though how it would have done any particular good does not appear. For the individual trees there is, however, some evidence.

Single trees certainly were used on the old stage; they had even occurred in the early pageants. Nichols, in a description of the pageant at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth mentions one, for example, which was really elaborate. The Revels accounts also have many allusions to trees: "Tymber for the forest" (p. 41; 1572-73); "A tree of Holly for the Dutton's playe;" "other Holly for the forest" (p. 34; 1572-73). From the records for 1573-74

are the following: "Paper for patternes *and* for leaves of trees" (p. 53); "Mrs. Dane for Canvas for . . . great hollow trees" (p. 54); "armes of okes for the hollo tree" (p. 56); "Lathes for the Hollo tree" (p. 59); "fflagbroches for the knobbes of the tree" (p. 59). Plays on the public stage frequently require single trees. *The Spanish Tragedy* (Act III, scene 13) has one; in *The Case is Altered* (Act IV, scene 4) a man climbs up and hides in one; *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (scene 9) has, according to the text, a magic tree with leaves of gold; *The Battle of Alcazar*, published the same year, has a tree in its dumb show (Act V) from which, at the proper moment, crowns fall off; *The Fairy Pastoral* calls for a "Hollowe Oake with vice of wood to shutt to." In *The Warning for Faire Women* (dumb show, Act II) a tree suddenly rises which is later hewn down before the audience; *John A Kent and John A Cumber* (Act III, scene 1) calls for a character to enter out of a tree "if possible it may be." *Parasitaster* shows a tree by which a man climbs up into a balcony. *David and Bethsabe* (Act II, scene 10) probably had a tree, for it is referred to in the text, and the direction says: "Absalon hangs by the haire." To this there is a reference in Henslowe's diary: "Pd for poleyes and workmanship for to hange Absolome," etc. (p. 241). His list of properties also mentions trees: "a tre of gowlden apelles" and "Tantelouse tre." And so instances might be multiplied, showing that a single tree was no uncommon property, and that it sometimes was very elaborate in construction. To be sure, these elaborate trees would hardly be duplicated to represent a forest, and it is also possible, though not probable, that some of the single trees, like that in *Parasitaster*, were only the post which supported the balcony. Yet, giving all due regard to this possible explanation of a few instances, it is certain that trees were a common property on the old stage.

Not only did single trees exist, but many of the wood scenes require them, showing that the wood-setting, whatever it was, could not have been merely a curtain. A few illustrations must serve for many. *Gallathea* demands a special oak as well as woods; *Edward I* has a line, "I must hang my weapon upon this

tree" (l. 190), but also supposes woods in other scenes; *Common Conditions*, one of the few plays to speak of woods in the directions, has a girl bound to a tree (l. 165); *Orlando Furioso* is full of references to woods and must certainly have had such a setting; at line 575 Sacrapant says, "Hang up the Roundelays on the trees," and carves upon them the name of his love. A painted curtain would hardly have sufficed for these scenes. Heywood's spectacular *Brazen Age* (printed 1613) makes most elaborate requirements. Act V, scene 3, for instance, has these directions: "Enter Hercules from a rock aboue, tearing down trees;" "All the Princes breake downe the trees and make a fire in which Hercules placeth himselfe." Finally, the burlesque play of *Narcissus* (presented at St. John's College, Oxford, 1602) shows pretty clearly that wood scenes were represented by actual settings more or less like trees. A curtain could quite as easily and almost as humorously have been burlesqued as the setting which was actually held up to ridicule, but there is not a hint of a curtain for this purpose in the play. The scenery is prepared before the eyes of the audience in the following manner, and commented upon at the same time:

Enter one with a buckett and boughes and grasse.

A well there was withouten mudd,
Of silver hue, with waters cleare,
Whome neither sheepe that chawe the cudd,
Shepheards nor goates came ever neare;
Whome, truth to say, nor beast nor bird,
Nor windfalls yet from trees had stirrde.

(He strawes the grasse about the buckett.

And round about it there was grasse,
As learned lines of poets showe,
Which by next water nourisht was; *(Sprinkles water)*
Neere to it too a wood did growe. *(Sets down the bowes)*
To keep the place, as well I wott,
With too much sunne from being hott.
And thus least you should have mistooke it,
The truth of all I to you tell:
Suppose you the well had a buckett,
And so the buckett stands for the well;
And 'tis, least you should counte mee for a sot O,
A very pretty figure cald *pars pro toto*.

This is "symbolism" with a vengeance; but it certainly establishes, if the burlesque had any point at all, that the wood-setting actually did exist, and that it was sometimes, at least, in the form of separate trees.

Granting, then, that woods and forests were thus represented by individual trees, though not denying that a painted drop may also have been employed, we may well inquire how so strange and unwieldy a property was managed. It was, of course, not so difficult to arrange as a forest-setting similarly constituted would be upon our modern stage. A few trees—one, two, three, five—were enough, for the convention of "symbolic" scenery, by which one property suggested many, saved the Elizabethans much expense and trouble. It is therefore quite unnecessary to suppose that in a wood scene the "trees" covered any large part of the stage. *Orlando Furioso*, with half its action laid in the woods, must have had some open space for the other half. No one, indeed, could imagine the whole stage covered with trees. Two or three would have been quite sufficient.

What became of this "forest" during the other scenes of the play? Perhaps in some cases it was concealed by a curtain, but it is not at all necessary to suppose so. For here the other great principle of Elizabethan stage-craft came into play—that of simultaneous scenery with which English audiences had been long familiar—for example in the "standing" mediaeval Scripture plays, where Hell, Heaven, Galilee, and Jerusalem were all represented side by side at one time on the one stage.¹ The Elizabethan drama offers no such striking collocation as that, but, once more to refer to *Alphonsus*, a staging similar in principle occurs when the chair and woods are both before the audience at once; and several similar instances might be given. To us this, like the symbolic scenery, seems absurd; our ideas of dramatic reality are different from those of the Elizabethans, for we have been educated in a different school and expect different things from the theater.

Still we can appreciate how such a custom might arise even

¹ For a fuller discussion of this simultaneous staging and plays which illustrate it, see *Modern Philology*, June, 1905. Mr. John Corbin in *The Atlantic* for March, 1906, has a very interesting and suggestive article on the same subject.

today. We listen undisturbed to a public reader when he says before beginning a play: "The scene is a forest—on the right, a tree; on the left, a rock." We allow him, without leaving the stage, to change his scene to the city street or the interior of a house; we do not object if he returns in a moment or two to the tree and the rock again. Perhaps his hero is at some point in the play bound to the tree and left there during a scene or two. Of course, the tree is not represented—it could not be; but we imagine it and are quite content. Suppose, however, instead of the single reader, a whole company; allow them like him to change their scene at will—to move the place of action back and forth at the mention of a word. Such a situation is certainly conceivable and not especially confusing. Continue the picture. Suppose, as before, that the play requires one of the persons to be bound to a tree; obviously the tree must now actually be presented. To attempt to imagine the hero bound would be ridiculous. Yet there need not be a whole forest—it is not necessary to represent a complete background. We can still imaginatively furnish the rest of the stage as richly and completely as our experience and fancy permit. We should not object especially to the same sudden changes of scene as with the single reader; the tree might even be left on the stage without particularly disturbing us; but we would insist upon its being there when the plot required it. With a single reader its presence was impossible; with a whole company it becomes inevitable. This was exactly the situation upon the Elizabethan stage. Properties were used because they were necessary to the plot, and, with the realistic tendencies everywhere manifest in the old plays, we may well imagine them to have been as accurately and convincingly made as possible. Everything which the story required was provided freely, and perhaps some properties like the woods in scenes of desolation were employed merely to suggest the desired background. But as for accurately or completely representing the background, that was, on the projecting stage, neither possible nor, so far as we can see, desired.¹

¹I have so far practically disregarded the curtained rear stage. This, on account of its distance from the audience and its poorer lighting, would naturally be used less fre-

Thus the question of scenery settles itself if we think of it in any large way. We cannot say definitely, indeed, whether there were or not "drop curtains painted in perspective"—the question Malone wished to answer. That, however, is hardly the point, for much modern scenery would hardly come under such a description. We can say definitely that, so far as the front stage is concerned (and that, in the public theaters, must have been the most important), there was nothing like our modern system of settings which presents a complete and congruous picture; but that again is hardly the point either, for nobody with any knowledge of the old stage can suppose such a condition possible. Do we not mean, then, when we ask if scenery were used on the stage of Shakespeare: Were there any furnishings employed which were not really necessary, but which were used merely to make more vivid the supposed place of action, especially if that place were out-of-doors? To this the use of the wood-setting, especially for any scene of desolation, makes possible an affirmative answer; in proving it we have, I think, come nearest to showing that the English stage managers even in the sixteenth century had a desire similar to our own, not only for necessary, but also for appropriate settings—appropriate, however, from their point of view, though not necessarily from ours.

A second disputed question—Was the Elizabethan stage bare and unfurnished?—is of course answered by the proof of the existence of the forest-setting. If a property so difficult to construct and so cumbrous to manage were employed on the public stage, others quite as useful, but easier to procure, must certainly have been common—not only thrones, beds, chairs, and tables, of which we are already certain, but rocks, wells, shops,¹ and the

quently than the front stage. The plays, unless one assume many directions which are not given, indicate few scenes which are to be played in it. In this rear stage, backgrounds could conceivably have been arranged so as to present a complete illusion, especially of indoor scenes. Whether the wood-setting was ever so arranged seems quite impossible of proof from the plays dating in Elizabeth's reign. The general impression which the plays have left upon my own mind is, that usually the woods were not placed on the curtained space, but rather at the rear of the front stage, especially if the curtained space was an alcove, and if the front stage had direct access on either side to the tiring-house.

¹ It seems probable—practically certain, indeed, if one assumes the alcove stage—that the numerous "shops" and "studies" of the Elizabethan plays were usually particular arrangements of the rear stage. A later paper will discuss this fully.

numerous other settings necessary for the plays. Even the thrones, chairs, tables, and beds with the ever-present arras would have made the stage far from bare; with trees, rocks, etc., the stage becomes almost crowded. When it was thronged with gallants and set for an elaborate play, it must have presented a spectacle full of life and color, far removed from any suggestion of bareness or even simplicity.

Finally as to the method of staging. I have already pointed out in a preceding paragraph how it must have differed from that of our modern stage, and have emphasized how it was really symbolic—a reader's stage, with a whole company instead of a single performer. Students have erred in thinking that because the old theater did not attempt often to represent completely any particular scene, it had no properties nor furnishings at all. It is only by recognizing clearly the existence of a large number of varied properties, and the symbolic use of one for many to indicate rather than to represent a scene—in short, an elaborately furnished reader's stage—that we shall ever understand the staging of the Elizabethan drama, with its sudden changes of scene or its apparently entire disregard of scene, and with its conventions of dramatic distance and of "incongruous" properties—trees and beds upon the stage side by side at the same time.

Perhaps it will make the whole subject clearer to picture the performance of some play which used trees in all the various ways I have mentioned. As no such play occurs to me, an imagined plot must serve. The play is one of the romantic dramas so common to the Elizabethan stage. The scene shifts between a forest and a desert in Africa, and the city of Rome. Before the performance begins the stage is already set with most of the properties necessary for the production. Near one door stand three or four trees—as many as the theater owns and as the stage space allows. They are not especially large; their trunks are of painted canvas stretched upon lath; their branches are perhaps not so gracefully arched as in nature, and their leaves are of bright-green cloth. Near the other door are a chair and table. Between them are twenty or thirty three-legged stools, and in the background across the front of the rear stage hangs the closed curtain

with a scene from classic story painted upon it. Across the front of the balcony hangs a cloth painted to represent a wall, and over the two exposed doors are respectively the inscriptions "Rome" and "Africa." On the pillars hangs the title of the play—now, unfortunately, unknown. Soon the three-legged stools are almost filled by young gallants. Presently the trumpet sounds for the third time, and from between the curtains steps the prologue. Then the play begins. From the door marked "Rome" enter two people in conversation; the lady Sylvia is, it appears, to be married by her avaricious guardian to his foolish son. The trees do not disturb us by their presence—they are unmentioned, and are therefore unnoticed. As soon as these two are gone, the curtain parts, and the guardian is discovered in his own room bending over a chest and counting his ward's fortune. He sends for her; the beautiful boy who plays the part of Sylvia enters and is ordered to prepare for an immediate marriage. The heiress protests, but her guardian remains obdurate. Sylvia begins to prepare for flight as soon as he has left her, and we are soon aware from her remarks to her maid that the scene has changed to her chamber, even though she has not left the stage. Then the curtains, which have been open all this time, though most of the action has been in front of them, now close as she goes out through the door marked "Rome," but only to re-enter through "Africa."¹ From her words on "this forest dark," "these mighty trees," we notice that the scene has again shifted. But in following Sylvia we did not notice a boy steal through the door into one of the hollow trees. Now Sylvia appeals to the gods for help, and he steps forth, a wood nymph, and leads her off the stage to find seclusion in the depths of the forest. The scene returns to the city again, and we

¹ I violate here the "Law of Re-entry," if I may so term it, formulated by Robert Pröls, in *Von den ältesten Drucken der Dramen Shakespeares* (1905), p. 107, which I did not see until this article was in type. According to Pröls no character ever is allowed in the Elizabethan drama to leave the stage and immediately re-enter, if, in the meantime the location of the scene has changed. Conversation, soliloquy by some other character, or some other action is introduced to mark the break. The reason for such a custom on a stage like that of Elizabethan times is obvious, and in many cases I believe it was obeyed. It will, if I am not mistaken, go far to explain the insertion of many passages which are otherwise difficult to account for and which have been often supposed to be "out" scenes. But it was not always obeyed; e.g., in *English Traveller* (p. 69), and I therefore let my account of an imaginary production stand as first composed.

hear the guardian directing his son to pursue the escaped maiden. They sit at the table, and the father very carefully maps out his son's journey. The foolish boy and his father both leave the stage, but the boy immediately appears through the other door, and is, we learn, lost in the forest. He hears outlaws coming, and for concealment climbs into the shelter of a leafy tree. The outlaws discover him and, making him descend, tie him to the tree and leave him alone. Here his father fortunately finds him, and together they continue the pursuit. After a short scene in the city again, Sylvia appears, explaining how she has left the forest and taken refuge in this desert. Here, however, a disguised prince meets her and falls in love with her, introducing in his passionate appeal references to “these shaggy trees.”

So the first act closes. The orchestra plays, and a clown enters and jigs. But during that amusement a great chair with a canopy above it comes creaking down from the “heavens.” It is the throne of the prince's father, and the young gallants are made to rise and move their stools closer together. More stools are brought in and placed about the throne. The next scene is obviously to be one of importance and likely to tax the capacity of the stage. It will, indeed, for the court is to be represented, the whole strength of the company is required, and the stage with this crowd of actors and spectators combined is too small for the trees to be left upon it. So, since the forest scenes are over and their room is more valuable than their presence, they are taken through the door into the storeroom. With their disappearance our interest in the performance ends, and we leave it to work itself out in the only too well-known way to its happy conclusion.

In some such way as this wood-settings, and presumably all settings, were used on the old stage. That the Forest of Arden should ever again be so represented, except as a matter of antiquarian interest, is neither likely nor desirable. From our modern point of view the whole is chaotic, absurd, impossible, and the plays written for such production necessarily seem incoherent and inexplicable. But if we imagine them given on a “reader's stage,” with its symbolic and simultaneous scenery, there is hardly one which does not at once become, so far as its staging

is concerned, simple and intelligible. The stage of Shakespeare was a "reader's stage," but it was by no means devoid of properties and furnishings; it was neither bare, primitive, nor child-like. It was merely different.

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